

1-7. (Canceled).

8. (Currently Amended) A ~~computer-programmed~~ method for defining a metadata schema to facilitate passing data between an eXtensible Markup Language (XML) document and a hierarchical database, the ~~computer-programmed~~ method comprising:

accessing a database schema indicative of database field names and a hierarchical structure for a hierarchical database;

accessing a document schema that defines the hierarchical structure, content data syntax, and semantics of valid, well-formed, XML documents that can be passed into and out of the hierarchical database, the document schema including an XML element name that maps to a database field name in the database schema; and

relating the database schema and the document schema to provide a metadata schema that enables data to be passed between an XML document and the hierarchical database, the database schema comprising a database field type identifier and the document schema comprising an XML element data type identifier that maps to the database field type identifier to facilitate converting content data between the XML element data type and the database field type based on the database field type identifier and the XML element data type identifier.

9. (Currently Amended) The ~~computer-programmed~~ method of claim 8, wherein the document schema comprises an XML schema that complies with an industry standard for XML schemas.
10. (Currently Amended) The ~~computer-programmed~~ method of claim 9, wherein the industry standard for XML schemas comprises version 1.0 as set forth by the World Wide Web Consortium.
11. (Currently Amended) The ~~computer-programmed~~ method of claim 8, wherein the database schema comprises a predefined database schema comprising a set of java classes representative of one or more nodes and one or more fields of the hierarchical database.
12. (Currently Amended) The ~~computer-programmed~~ method of claim 8, wherein the document schema comprises at least one directive metadata element configured to not interfere with third-party applications using the document schema and to facilitate passing data between the XML document and the hierarchical database.
13. (Currently Amended) The ~~computer-programmed~~ method of claim 8, wherein the at least one directive metadata element is selected from the group of directives consisting of a storage and retrieval directive, an index directive, and a hierarchical database indicator directive.

14. (Currently Amended) The ~~computer-programmed~~ method of claim 8, wherein the hierarchical database comprises an Information Management System (IMS) database.

15-18. (Canceled).